

## **AI Summary: Clint Pittman, County Landscape & Parks Director, Quits Job to Run For County Commissioner**

The article details the controversial resignation of Clint Pittman, the Columbia County Landscape & Parks Director, who left his 26-year position to run for County Commissioner. Highlighted is the widespread "good ole' boy" backroom dealings, ethical conflicts, and selective amnesia among the county's leadership regarding their own ethics policies.

At the core of the controversy is the County Code of Ethics, unanimously passed in 2021, which strictly prohibits county employees from running for the Board of County Commissioners while still employed. Despite this clear rule, Pittman initially attempted to circumvent it by requesting an unpaid leave of absence. This request was backed by questionable legal maneuvers from his attorney, Todd Kennon, who argued that Pittman was not officially a candidate yet, despite having campaign signs erected and a candidate bank account established.

The situation was further complicated by County Attorney Joel Foreman, who drafted an ethics opinion for Kennon at the taxpayers' expense, violating the policy that restricts such advisory opinions to county managers or commissioners. During a poorly documented Thursday morning County 5 meeting, the lack of publicly available backup material violated the County charter.

During this meeting, the commissioners displayed astounding hypocrisy. Several criticized the ethics policy as an "antiquated" scheme designed to protect incumbents, conveniently forgetting that they themselves had unanimously enacted the ordinance just a few years prior. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rocky Ford, Pittman's direct political opponent, attempted a legally unfounded recusal from the vote based on an "appearance of impropriety."

Ultimately, the convoluted legal posturing was cut short by Pittman himself. Taking the podium, he dismissed his attorney's questionable arguments and chose to comply fully with the law. He officially resigned from his county position to run legally, exposing the chaotic and contradictory political climate within Columbia County.